



THE TENNESSEE WARBLER

Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

April, 2012

Editor, Theresa Graham

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The final details have been worked out and the Bristol Chapter has organized what promises to be a great Annual Meeting in Johnson City next month. This joint meeting with The Virginia Society of Ornithology will feature a renowned speaker, a diverse paper session and a wonderful lineup of field trips. Please see the article on pages 2 & 3 for complete information. To assist the chapter with planning, please make your reservations as early as possible.

Anyone who would like to submit an item to appear on the agenda at the Board of Director's (BOD) meeting on Saturday, May 19th, please send it directly to me (dickpreston@bigriver.net) as soon as possible. Please include a brief note explaining your rationale or request. One item already submitted involves two amendments to our Constitution and Bylaws. Please see the article by Susan McWhirter (Memphis) and the Constitution Committee on page 5 for details. To facilitate things at the BOD meeting I urge all Directors to take a few moments to review the minutes of the Fall Meeting. These are posted on our website (www.tnbirds.org).

I've been approached by several members who believe it is time to consider a new logo for our Society. Whether we retain the Northern Mockingbird design as is, re-design it, or adopt an entirely new emblem will be up for discussion. Options are almost limitless, and I'd like to hear the opinions of as many members as possible. If you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting, I still desire to hear your suggestions and be able to note them at the BOD meeting.

As we went to press, Tennesseans had submitted 2,007 checklists over the four days of the Great Backyard Bird Count. Collectively, we reported 141 species and 160,688 individual birds in Tennessee. Nationally more than 101,567 checklists were submitted reporting 617 species and 17,114,131 individual birds. While we clearly could have done better, I thank all of you who did take the time to submit your sightings. And special thanks to Dean Edwards (Knoxville) who once again served as one of the two reviewers for Tennessee checklists. Dean devoted many an hour to quality assurance of our submissions. Please take a moment to explore the data at: www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Finally, it is a pleasure to note the spectacular success of this year's Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival. Co-sponsored by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, TOS and the Barbara J. Mapp Foundation, the Festival drew more than 3,200 visitors to Birchwood and the Hiwassee Refuge. While the Hooded Crane was a star attraction, the thousands in attendance were able to marvel at the majesty of the hundreds of Sandhill Cranes in view. Many of the programs, presentations and activities were new this year and clearly delighted the crowds. Please see the related article on page 7 for additional details.

Please send comments or suggestions to Dick Preston: dickpreston@bigriver.net.

2012 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING
JOINT MEETING
TENNESSEE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
VIRGINIA SOCIETY of ORNITHOLOGY
Johnson City, TN
MAY 18-20, 2012

The Bristol Bird Club, a chapter of TOS and VSO, invites state members and all other interested birders to the Joint TOS/VSO Spring Meeting May 18-20, 2012

Dr. Andrew Dolby, VSO president and Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Mary Washington, is organizing and coordinating both the paper session and research poster session.

Rick Knight, a member of the BBC, put together a series of high-elevation field trips with a couple of new approaches:

-- Field trips all day Friday, May 18, starting from the parking lot of the Holiday Inn at 7 a.m. and returning to the Inn by 3 p.m. Several birders have made arrangements to take part and, if you are interested, contact Knight at: 423-483-4204 or email: rick@bristolbirdclub.org)

-- A Friday night field trip to Big Bald Mountain along the North Carolina line will search for the Northern Saw-whet Owl in its breeding habitat.

In addition, there will be great birding trips to Unaka Mountain, Roan Mountain, and Shady Valley. Most of the major trips to these areas will also be on Saturday and Sunday, while some will also be birded on Friday.

Two social hours will be held with one on Friday before the evening program and the second before the Saturday evening banquet and speaker. It is believed birders will want ample opportunity to meet and share field trip findings with new acquaintances. It is also an opportunity to exchange ideas about the next day's scheduled field trips.

The speaker for Friday night's program will be Dr. Andrew W. Jones, recording secretary of the American Ornithologists' Union and Director of Science, William A. and Nancy R. Klamm Endowed Chair of Ornithology and Head of Department of Ornithology, Cleveland Museum of Natural History. He will speak on the subject of "Who keeps changing my field guide?"

Dr. Jones will also help lead field trips Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The banquet speaker will be Dr. Fred Alsop III, world-renowned birder, ornithologist for over 45 years, and Professor of Biology at East Tennessee State University. Dr. Alsop has published over 100 articles and notes on birds in scientific journals and authored more than fifteen bird books and field guides, including the Smithsonian Handbook: *Birds of North America*.

Several vendors have agreed to provide booths. Among them will be Buteo Books & ABA Sales, the largest ornithological book dealer in the nation.

The Bristol Bird Club is busy putting the finishing touches on the details. We are excited and hope you are. TOS and VSO look forward to your attending. You will not only have a great time and enjoy fine high-elevation birding, but you will meet and make new birding friends.

You are not required to be a member of either TOS or VSO to make reservations, register and attend this meeting.

Directions and Lodging

Traveling either north or south on I-81, exit to I-26 east just a few short miles south of Bristol. The Holiday Inn in Johnson City is at 101 West Springbrook Drive, just off N. Roan St. Come in on Interstate 26, take exit 20. Go north on N. Roan St., and turn left at the stoplight at N. Roan and Springbrook. Rooms at the Holiday Inn are

\$85 + occupancy tax (same price for 1 to 4 occupants). Reserve by calling the Inn at 423-282-4611 and mention that you are attending the state-wide birding convention. The block of rooms reserved for the meeting will be held until three weeks before the meeting. The Holiday Inn has a full restaurant and begins serving breakfast at 6:30 a.m. each morning. Breakfast is not included in the price of the room.

Other contact information:

For registration: Janice Martin, Club Treasurer 423-573-1829
email: janice@bristolbirdclub.org

For the paper presentation and poster sessions:
Dr. Andrew Dolby
Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Mary Washington
Phone: 540-654-1420 email: adolby@umw.edu

Other information: Dave Worley 276-971-7244
email: dave@bristolbirdclub.org
Wallace Coffey 423-360-2532
email: wallace@bristolbirdclub.org

Additional Information at:

TOS website: <http://www.tnbirds.org>
VSO website: <http://www.virginiabirds.net>
Bristol Bird Club website: <http://www.bristolbirdclub.org>
Paper Presentation and Poster Sessions: http://www.virginiabirds.net/2012_AM.html

Registration:

Meeting registration fee \$25.00
Banquet Buffet and Saturday Evening Program \$25.00

To be assured of a banquet/program reservation, have the envelope with your check and registration in the mail and postmarked BY Friday, May 11, 2012.



JOINT MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number(s) _____

Email: _____ Local Chapter(s) _____

VSO _____ TOS _____ (If neither, leave blanks.)

\$ _____ for _____ Meeting registrations @ \$25 each

\$ _____ for _____ Dinner and Program Registrations @ \$25 each

Total enclosed _____

Mail registration form and check to Bristol Bird Club Treasurer
Bristol Bird Club
c/o Janice Martin, Treas.
111 Dairy Circle
Bristol, TN 37620

CONSERVATION POLICY COMMITTEE

Our Conservation Policy Committee is Co-Chaired by Melinda Welton (Nashville) and Gregg Elliott (Memphis). Other committee members are: Bill Franks (Chattanooga), Chuck Nicholson (Knoxville), Cyndi Routledge (Nashville) and Chris Sloan (Nashville).

Recent actions taken by the Committee:

On December 2, 2011, TOS joined with more than 120 other conservation organizations from 30 states on a petition to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. The petition strongly urges a ban on lead ammunition and fishing tackle. Lead is a highly toxic substance and a significant cause of illness and mortality among fish and wildlife.

On December 9, 2011, TOS joined with 57 other conservation organizations and sent a letter to Governor Bill Haslam requesting his administration's support for the Real Estate Transfer Fund (RETF). The RETF provides funding for wetlands, land acquisition, parks and greenways and agricultural resources conservation. Last year, \$16.5 million dollars was disbursed from the RETF. Specifically, we urged the Governor to include the RETF dollars in the 2012 - 2013 budget as a "recurring" item. This would have the effect of keeping these dollars from being diverted from their original legislative intent and placed into the general fund as unrestricted dollars. A companion letter was sent to the Commissioner of The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Mr. Martineau.

On December 14, 2011, TOS signed an American Bird Conservancy petition urging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to issue mandatory regulations for the wind industry. TOS supports the use of alternative energy sources, including wind power. However, we also believe the industry needs to be governed by mandatory rather than voluntary guidelines, specifically with regard to the location and operation of wind turbines. The government estimates a minimum of 444,000 birds are killed every year in collisions with wind turbines. We believe the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to issue mandatory guidelines under the provisions of The Migratory Bird Treaty Act. TOS is a member of the American Bird Conservancy.

On February 16, 2012, TOS sent a letter to Governor Bill Haslam urging his leadership to support passage of The Scenic Vistas Protection Act. Provisions in the Act would provide important protection for the rapidly declining Cerulean Warbler, which reaches its highest breeding densities over the coalfields in the Cumberland Mountains of Tennessee.

Dick Preston

July 15th Deadline

The deadline date for the August issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is July 15th. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

Submit Material To:

Theresa Graham, Editor
PO Box 366, Oakland TN 38060
(901) 465-4263 (home)
(901) 748-9324 (fax)
e-mail: 2graham@bellsouth.net

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE REPORT

After careful consideration the Constitution Committee (Richard Connors, Danny Gaddy and Susan McWhirter) proposes two changes to our Constitution and By-laws. We believe these changes will clarify some confusing language and make constitutional a long-standing voting practice.

We propose the following amendments to the TOS constitution and By-laws:

Article II – Membership

Section 1 currently states “.... the membership shall consist of Active, Family, Sustaining, Life, Honorary and Student members....” The Constitution Committee proposes that “Active” be changed to “Individual” in this section and all subsequent sections because the current language is confusing and seems to imply inactiveness on the part of the other categories. Subsequent applicable sections are Article VII, Section 3 (re: meetings and quorum), and the Dues section of the By-laws.

Article VII – Meetings and Quorum

Section 3 currently states “.....Voting members are defined as Active, Sustaining, Life, Honorary and Family memberships, which shall have one vote.” The Constitution Committee proposes the following change: “Voting memberships are defined as Individual, Sustaining, Life and Honorary each of which shall have one vote, and Family Membership which shall have no more than two votes, one per each adult present.”

We will present the proposed amendments at the Spring Board of Directors’ meeting and at the general meeting in the evening. The proposals will become amendments if approved by two-thirds of the voting members present at the general meeting.

Seeking Historic TOS Photographs for Video Presentation

Nashville chapter member Danny Shelton is working on a video presentation to capture the 100 year history of TOS. He plans to present this at our Centennial celebration in 2015. He is seeking historic photographs from all chapters, especially those showing birders during field trips, outings, and celebrations. He is also seeking old documents and historic images. Danny would be grateful to speak with members who are familiar with the history and founders of their chapters, and can recount important events and influential persons.

Please send scanned photos (highest quality possible) to Danny at dashelt@comcast.net. If known, please include image date, names of persons in image, and location. Danny can scan and mail back hard copy photographs.

Please mail hard copy photos to:
Danny Shelton
705 Countrywood Drive
Franklin, TN 37064
cell (615) 604-0166
e-mail dashelt@comcast.net

Please help us preserve our history forever!

J.B. OWEN MEMORIAL AWARD

The purpose of the J.B. Owen Memorial Fund is to honor the memory of J.B. Owen, longtime TOS member known to thousands in east Tennessee through his columns in Knoxville newspapers. J.B. Owen was an active member of the Knoxville Chapter from 1947 until his death in 2001. He received the TOS Distinguished Service Award in 1990. An annual award is made by the Fund in the expected amount of \$250 to \$500 to promote the study of birds in Tennessee through research, conservation, and environmental education.

The J.B. Owen Award is open to anyone with a project that promotes the welfare and conservation of birds in Tennessee. Applicants are encouraged to submit:

- Cover letter with short project description and applicant contact information.
- Resume
- Brief project proposal, of one to three pages, showing topic of the project, problem to be addressed, objectives, expected results and significance, deliverables (for example, written report, journal article, presentation), project location and project schedule.

Each year applications are due by May 1 and should be sent, preferably by e-mail, to cpgobert@hotmail.com or mailed to Carole Gobert, 1304 Barcelona Drive, Knoxville, TN 37923. The J.B. Owen Committee of KTOS will evaluate applications and will typically announce the Award winner or winners the following September.

Endangered California Condor Update

From the American Bird Conservancy:

In 1982, the last 22 wild California Condors were captured in a last-ditch effort to avert their extinction. In 1992, the first offspring of this captive population were released back into the wild as part of the California Condor Recovery Program. Today there are 390 California Condors in the world. Of these, 210 are free-flying in the wild: 118 in California, 73 in Arizona (primarily the Grand Canyon) and 19 in Mexico.

Since the first release in 1992, through December of 2009, 135 free-flying California Condors have been killed or died of unknown causes. Of 98 carcasses examined, the cause of death was able to be determined in 76 cases. The leading cause: lead toxicosis (virtually all from ingesting lead pellets or bullet fragments). The breakdown: 13 of 50 juveniles (26%) and 10 of 15 (67%) adult condors from lead poisoning, while 8 of 11 nestlings died from ingesting trash.

It is estimated that 8 to 10 million birds die of lead poisoning every year. Lead pellets are mistaken for grit and lead pellets and bullets fragments are taken in by raptors that scavenge carcasses and gut piles. Included are numerous eagles, hawks, vultures, ravens and Mourning Doves.

Data above taken from a new study authored by scientists from the San Diego Zoo Institute for Research Conservation, with partners from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; The National Park Service; U.S. Geological Survey; The University of California at Santa Cruz and Davis; The Peregrine Fund; San Diego Zoo Global and the Phoenix Zoo.

TOS is a member of the American Bird Conservancy and has supported their efforts to ban toxic lead ammunition and fishing gear.

2012 TENNESSEE SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

The Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival is a celebration of the thousands of Sandhill Cranes that migrate through or spend the winter at the confluence of the Tennessee and Hiwassee Rivers near Birchwood, Tennessee. Nearly 3,000 folks attended the Festival on January 14 and 15. The Festival was sponsored by The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), The Tennessee Ornithological Society and The Barbara J. Mapp Foundation.

The rousing success of this year's Festival could not have been achieved without the leadership and extraordinary efforts of Co-chairs Melinda Welton (NTOS), Cyndi Routledge (NTOS) and Dan Hicks (TWRA). The list of volunteers who contributed their time and efforts is long and impressive and includes, but is not limited to the following individuals:

First and foremost, are Melinda and Cyndi. Between them, they contributed over one thousand "woman" hours and 4,000 miles to make this event happen. The level of success achieved this year would not have happened without them.

Bob Hatcher (NTOS) of the American Eagle Foundation, for coordinating the popular Birds of Prey program; Linda Kelly (NTOS) for maintaining the TOS information and display table; Polly Rooker (NTOS/TWRA) for coordinating meetings with TWRA and arranging for the making of donation boxes to benefit the Tennessee Crane Fund; Kevin Bowden (NTOS) for wearing the "Sandy the Crane" costume and Candice Bowden, for her willingness to step in whenever and wherever she was needed all weekend; Cyndi Routledge, who along with everything else she did, produced the educational posters along with Scott Somershoe (NTOS/TWRA); Danny and Patricia Shelton for audio-visual contributions and donating the proceeds of Danny's video; Tim Jeffers for his photography and assisting with the TOS table; Danny Gaddy (CTOS) for coordinating the efforts of the many volunteers from the Chattanooga chapter; David Stone (CTOS) Program Coordinator, for coming up with a comprehensive schedule; Vickie Henderson (NTOS) for creating the "Discover Birds Activity Book" underwritten by TOS; Dr. David Aborn (CTOS) for designing the visitor survey and providing detailed analysis of the economic impact of the Festival on local communities; Steve Routledge (NTOS) for serving as Scope Coordinator and who logged 2,500 miles carrying out Festival related chores; "Scope Ladies" Susan Hollyday, Elaine Foust and JohnnieSue Lyons, who worked all day, both days, sharing their scopes and knowledge, enhancing the experience for hundreds of visitors; Jimmie Wilkinson, who not only provided a scope, but set up a "Field Guide" station for attendees to read about what they were seeing; Gregg Elliott (MTOS) for internet and e-vite services; Kristie Baker (NTOS), who seemed to be assisting everywhere there was a need throughout the weekend; BJ Haas at the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Foundation for setting up the special account to handle finances and establishing the Tennessee Crane Fund; Robin Barrow (KTOS) for demonstrating the crane kit provided by the International Crane Foundation; John Noel (NTOS) for seeing that the buses and parking went smoothly, food was delivered and cheerfully filling in as needed; and the many other members of the Chattanooga, Knoxville and Nashville chapters as well as the Warrenton Audubon chapter in Clarksville, for providing scopes, answering thousands of questions and ensuring that all the visitors had a great experience and left with a new respect for TWRA, TOS and especially, the cranes.

And then there is Charles Murray. Charles engendered enormous goodwill for Tennessee and our Society by spending countless hours at the observation point, meeting and greeting a great many of the thousands of visitors who flocked to the refuge since the Hooded Crane was first reported on December 13, 2011. Charles answered questions, gave directions to the refuge and details on the whereabouts of the Hooded Crane through personal contact and continuous updates he posted to the tn-bird list serve. Charles also maintained a visitor logbook, collecting valuable statistical information about the minimum of 4,352 visitors from 47 states and 15 countries. That is in addition to the estimated 3,000 visitors who attended the Festival. More importantly, he provided more detailed information on the comings and goings of Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes around the refuge than we've ever had before.

Finally, to all those whom I've overlooked or otherwise omitted here: thank you one and all. You have helped to educate the public to the value of Sandhill Cranes as a watchable wildlife resource. And you have brought great credit to our Society.

Dick Preston

Discover Birds Activity Book – A TOS Sponsored Children’s Publication

The Discover Birds Activity Book is a fun new children’s publication sponsored by TOS and designed to get kids excited about birds! Written and illustrated by TOS member Vickie Henderson, the book’s lively illustrations and text focus on fun facts about how birds adapt for winter survival.

For example, do you know how a wild turkey stays warm in the winter? What makes birds look so much bigger on a cold day? Or, why sandhill cranes must roost in shallow water? You will find answers to these questions and more. The book includes familiar backyard birds and covers other species that migrate, including wintering sandhill cranes, whooping cranes and bald eagles. Bird conservation facts are interspersed with interesting information about bird behavior and their habitat.

Author Vickie Henderson describes this book as the exciting “introductory edition”.

“While I was creating this book for the Tennessee Sandhill Crane Festival under a tight time table, many more ideas and fun facts came to mind than I could include in these pages. Children have curious minds and vivid imaginations. Show them the fascinating in nature and give them tools for learning, and you have a magic combination with limitless possibilities.

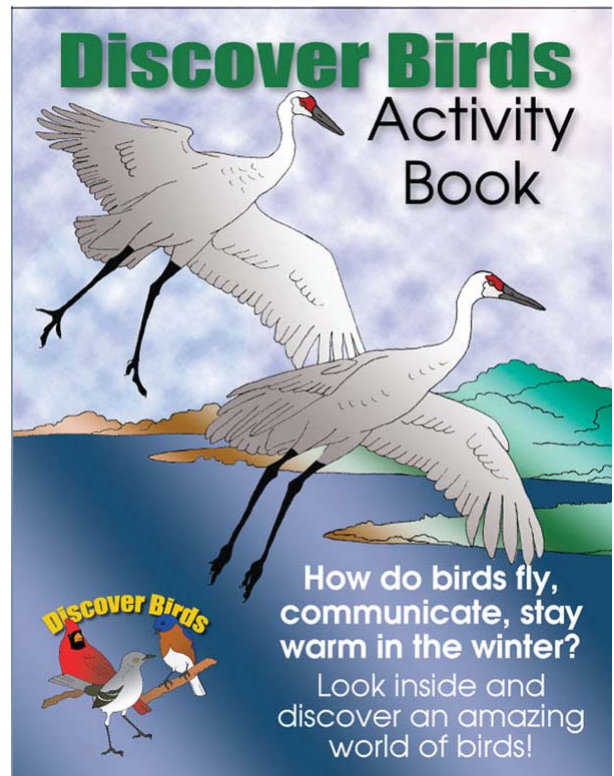
*That is what makes the **Discover Birds Activity Book** an exciting project for me. Its goal is to help kids feel excited about birds, and as they participate in the activities, discover their own talents and how they can use them to help birds.”*

The book’s back cover includes a “Discover Birds” membership card that can be filled out and used by classrooms or individual students. That’s all it takes to join a community of young citizen scientists that are discovering and helping the world of birds!

The twelve-page book includes illustrations to color, questions to answer, a crossword puzzle to test new knowledge, and activity suggestions. A vocabulary list is provided along with a list of resources for further research and learning. The **Discover Birds Activity Book** is a child’s starter kit to a fascinating world of birds!

The books are being sold for \$2.00 and may be ordered for individual use or in larger numbers for use in classrooms and other organized educational groups.

To make these books available through your local chapter or to arrange individual purchases contact Cyndi Routledge by phone: 931-648-0911, or by email: routledges@bellsouth.net



A Special Sandhill Crane Festival Reflection

by Cyndi Routledge

After cleaning up at Birchwood Elementary school, Steve and I headed back out to Hiwassee Refuge to repeat the same there...after the car was all but packed and the visitors were all but a memory I went and stood where all those scopes and all the visitors had been all weekend, alone with my thoughts. The cold evening air was blowing over me, the sky a beautiful red and orange color...and there I stood still. I closed my eyes and listened to the hauntingly beautiful voices of the Cranes as they drifted in to roost for the night. It was so peaceful, so reflective, and so emotional that I couldn't hold back the tears...I stood there and wept like a child until the day turned into dark and the song of the Cranes turned to a hush of coos.

The ride home was a quiet one...echoes of ancient voices still swirling in my head, thoughts of the expressions on visitor's faces when they saw the Cranes for the first time or the excitement that rumbled through the crowd when an Eagle flew into view. Once home mundane chores took center stage until my body couldn't do anymore and I fell into bed. As I woke up this morning in the quiet warmth of my bedroom I realized I was revitalized and somehow energized, not from sleep, but rather from that quiet moment at the end of a Festival, at the end of that day, embraced by the tranquility of the Cranes.

So here I begin again or perhaps continue this work of the heart with the memories of not only what we all accomplished this past weekend, the lives we touched, the minds forever changed but the realization of what still needs to be done...today and tomorrow and the day after that...To ensure that my granddaughter and her granddaughter can one day stand there on that same spot and watch Tennessee's Sandhill Cranes!



CHRISTMAS COUNT DATA DUE

All Tennessee Bird Counts should have the following data included with the bird statistics:

1. Miles and hours by foot, car, and other modes (canoe, horse, etc.) for each party.
2. Miles and hours for each nightbirding (owling) party are kept separately.
3. Feeder/yard watching hours are also kept separately; include names of feeder/yard watchers.
4. All count day weather data: temps; wind; precipitation; clouds, storms/fronts.
5. Please include the starting and ending times of the count.
6. Please include the number of observers, number of field parties, and names of all observers. For example, one person in a car is 1 observer in 1 party; 4 people in another car are 4 observers in one party; this example results in 5 observers in 2 parties.

Please send the data to Ron Hoff, 282 Hackworth Lane, Clinton, TN 37716. Email is acceptable at aves7000@bellsouth.net. I would like to have the data sometime in the first month after the count. This allows timely reporting to *The Migrant* editor.

These statistics help future researchers make better use of the data. It greatly helps any count compiler to follow the latest AOU checklist order when turning in data. This is the checklist that the compiler follows and it is usually updated every year. The checklist can be found at <http://www.aou.org>. If you do not have access to a computer, the species order on the most recently printed TOS field card is correct. It is also important that you keep a copy of the records you turn in to your compiler. This way, if anything gets lost, there is a backup.

Count week species (CW) are only used for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), as this count is conducted over a period of more than two weeks. CW species are recorded 3 days before and 3 days after the CBC date. Spring and Fall counts usually represent a one day event (two at most) and do not have a count period. The CW designation then is not used in any bird count other than a CBC for publication in *The Migrant*.

Rare or unusual birds should always be documented. If you don't have a standard form for reporting a rarity, just make some notes as quickly as you can after the sighting without looking at a guide book. Not using a guide book while making your notes helps insure that you only record what you saw, not what the book points out. Send these notes to your local compiler. Local compilers are encouraged to ask for documentation of rarities, keep a copy for their own records, and send a copy of the notes to the state compiler.

Young birds that are still dependent on the adults for food should not be counted. An example would be goslings with adults. Only count the adults.

As always, thanks for your efforts collecting data for these reports. Our birds need all the help they can get.

Ron Hoff
TOS state bird count compiler

CHAPTER NEWS

BRISTOL BIRD CLUB – A look back at the 2011 hawk watching season saw 10,157 hawks counted at the site on Clinch Mountain west of Bristol. The fall count is sponsored by the Bristol Bird Club. It was a year when each species exceeded the 10-year average for the species. As an example, the 10-year average for Broad-winged Hawks is 4,700 birds per year but this year's count for Broad-wings was 9,854. Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle were also had amazingly high counts.

A total of 22 birders helped provide coverage at the hawk watch last fall. BBC member Tom Hunter is the club's coordinator of the Mendota Hawk Watch.

Bristol Bird Club is funding a Watch Site Page for Mendota on <http://hawkcount.org>. The BBC donation shows the club's support for the national HawkCount.org server and the club's interest as sponsors for the Mendota Hawk Watch as a club project. The BBC name is displayed on a banner of the Mendota web site's pages.

The club has approved funding for Hunter to purchase a portable digital weather station that can be used for the 2012 season and future fall counts. It will monitor all significant weather conditions and sample them frequently to be stored in a data base that may later be retrieved.

A team from the Bristol Bird Club is working to establish real-time hourly reporting of the fall hawk migration from Mendota tower to the internet where anyone can access the latest hourly reports of hawk migration. BBC also hopes to provide not only the weather but also photos transmitted of major highlight events and big crowds at the lookout, even when you can't be there.

You may be able to see a list of who is at the tower, who is planning to be there, arrange with a friend to join and either text message or email your plans so the coordinator on the tower will know who is heading up in order to plan coverage for the rest of the day. It is slow getting everything in place with volunteer birders but this is the direction the Bristol Bird Club is migrating.

A large turnout of birders was on hand in November for the Bristol Bird Club's third annual Fall Burke's Garden Golden Eagle field trip. Everyone got all they could dream of as Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks staged a nice show. The two Bald Eagles along with two Golden Eagles and three Rough-legged Hawks kept not only the sky full but were truly nice eye candy. BBC has sponsored a late winter field trip to the area for more than 20 years.

Rick Knight was the field trip leader and kept everyone hustling with really nice finds and good birds all the way down to two Red-headed Woodpeckers among dead trees just up slope from the usual waterfowl stream in the bottomland farm. Rob Biller kept a careful list of birds seen on a smart phone as he entered data with one hand throughout the trip. At the end of the day, and a flick of the wrist, the database built a quick tally and total of birds seen. Rob emailed that to the fieldtrip leaders and lit up our text messages with the summary before we could exit Tazewell County. How much better does it get?

We had visitors from the Northern Virginia Bird Club and the Fredericksburg Bird Club.

This is a partial compilation of birds seen:

Gadwall 6, Mallard 33, Green-winged Teal 3, Bald Eagle 2 Northern Harrier 1, Red-tailed Hawk 15, Rough-legged Hawk 3. Golden Eagle 2, American Kestrel 5, Wilson's Snipe 1 Red-headed Woodpecker 2, Loggerhead Shrike 1, Common Raven 13.

CHAPTER NEWS

GREENEVILLE CHAPTER – A mild winter produced fewer birds than were present a year ago, but several notable observations were reported in Greene County.

Highlights included Northern Pintail (1-17, Dec. 4, 10; Jan. 1, 16); Canvasback (1, Feb. 18); Redhead (1, Dec. 24; Feb. 18); Bufflehead (1, Feb. 11, 25-26); Bald Eagle (1-2, Jan. 15 and mid-Feb.); Northern Goshawk (juvenile, Dec. 17 and Feb. 20); Red-shouldered Hawk (1, Jan. 1); Merlin (2, Dec. 17); Sandhill Crane (8, Dec. 24); Loggerhead Shrike (1, Dec. 17; Jan. 1); Horned Lark (1-54, Dec. 10, 31; Jan. 1; Feb. 18); Brown-headed Nuthatch (1, Kinser Park, Dec. 17, 21); Marsh Wren (1-2, Dec. 24; Jan. 1); Pine Warbler (1, Jan. 7); Common Yellowthroat (1, Dec. 24; Jan. 1); Lapland Longspur (1, Jan. 1).

Don Miller

Members of the **LEE AND LOIS HERNDON CHAPTER** of Tennessee Ornithological Society held the 2011 Elizabethton Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 17. This was the 69th consecutive Elizabethton CBC conducted by the chapter. A total of 27 observers in six parties took part in the count.

Rick Knight, the long-time compiler of the count, noted that 70 species, plus two additional species during count week, were found on the Elizabethton CBC. The total is close to the 30-year average of 71 species. The all-time high for the Elizabethton CBC is 79 species, which has been achieved three times including in 2010.

The Roan Mountain CBC and was conducted by seven observers in two parties. A total of 49 species was found, slightly above the 30-year average of 44 species. The all-time is 55, which was recorded in 1987.

Each year, the chapter recognizes members who observe 200 or more species of birds in the five-county area of Northeast Tennessee. The counties involved include Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi and Washington. The award is named the Howard Langridge Memorial Award.

Rick Knight, a Johnson City resident, has found at least 200 species in every year except for three years since 1978. He also holds the record for most birds seen in a single year in the five-county area.

Other chapter members recognized this year were Roy Knispel of Johnson City with 218 species, and Brookie and Jean Potter, each with 215 species. The Potters live near Wilbur Lake in Carter County. Glen Eller of Fall Branch accumulated 210 species while both Rob Biller of Elizabethton and Don Holt of the Central community in Carter County reached 201 species.

Bryan Stevens

KNOXVILLE CHAPTER – The new KTOS website is online and can be viewed at <http://www.tnbirds.org/KTOS.html>. The KTOS Conservation Committee is up and running with Vickie Henderson and Wayne Schacher leading. KTOS members made a 2 mile donation to Operation Migration and volunteers helped TWRA restore the Osprey structure on Looney Island.

At the November meeting, Scott Somershoe, State Ornithologist with Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, shared a slideshow of his August, 2010, Southern California birding trip. Scott also gave the group an eBird primer and an update on the Watchable Wildlife Website which includes 185 places in Tennessee and has pages on birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and insects. Visit TWRA's Facebook fan page and ask questions, post photos, and discuss Tennessee Watchable Wildlife topics.

Mark Armstrong, the speaker at the December meeting, presented an overview of his banding work at Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge. Since 2005, 74 species and a total of 3,497 birds have been banded at Seven Islands.

For the January program, KTOS members shared photos from birding trips all around the United States and several countries.

The February program included a photo and video slideshow of Ed LeGrand's recent 24 day trip to Australia where he viewed and photographed 280-290 species of birds while visiting Sydney, Cairns, Darwin, Alice Springs and surrounding areas.

There were field trips to Turkey Creek Wetlands, Cove Lake State Park, Kyker Bottoms, Mossy Creek Wildlife Viewing Area and a Blue Moon Cruise on the Tennessee River to Hiwasee Island to see the Sandhill Cranes.

Melinda Fawver

CHAPTER NEWS

MEMPHIS CHAPTER – Ben Coffee was a founder of the Memphis chapter. Over many years, he and his wife Lula collected approximately 8,000 field cards which have been in the chapter's possession. Chapter member Dr. Michael Collins teaches ornithology at Rhodes College and some of his students and a few of our chapter members are entering the field cards for Shelby County and surrounding counties into eBirds. The students are paid for their time entering the data by donations from the chapter and from private gifts. So far over 2,820 cards have been entered listing 303 species including 293 for Shelby County, 222 for Lauderdale County, 193 for Lake County, 183 for Fayette County, and 219 for Crittenden County, AR. We believe this historical data will be valuable in evaluating the effects of changes in habitat and climate conditions.

Only in the last 4 or 5 years have we had Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in Shelby County, and over 40 of them stayed with us this winter at our local sewage plant. Some of the birds we had this winter that we don't get every year were Long-tailed Duck, Cackling Goose, Ross's Goose, Common Merganser, Common Loon, Say's Phoebe, and Franklin's Gull.

If you have information you want to put in our newsletter, send it to our newsletter editor Chad Brown at cwb496@bellsouth.net.

Our meetings are on the third Wednesday night of each month at 7 PM from September through May at St. George's Episcopal Church, 2425 South Germantown Road, Germantown, TN.

David Blaylock

NASHVILLE CHAPTER - It's been a very fun-filled and educational quarter as NTOS members have been treated to a variety of stimulating adventures. Frank Fekel coordinated field trips to Pace Point and the Big Sandy unit of the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Old Hickory Lake and dam area and to Percy Priest Lake. All three areas provide great looks at wintering waterfowl. We were especially treated with the presence of 3 Surf Scoters, including one male still in breeding plumage, at Percy Priest Lake. Quite a rarity for most of us present that day!

Our Christmas counts were held December 17 and Jan 1. A Tundra swan made a brief appearance as well as a Red-breasted Nuthatch, which is still somewhat scarce

here. A trio of Bald Eagles, as well as a trio of Merlins, was a pleasant addition to the collection found those days. Notable misses on the January 1 count included both Wild Turkeys and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Thanks to all who participated in both counts.

Richard Connors lined up three excellent programs for us. Dave Hawkins, a noted local photographer, shared his exquisite photographs of the birds and wildlife in many of Florida's "hot spots". Melinda Welton recounted her adventures this past summer onto a remote frozen island north of Alaska with her husband, John Noel. Tons of sea-faring waterfowl and one very curious and hungry polar bear added to the excitement. Or was it terror? Anyway, we're glad the polar bear was more interested in the whale carcass than he was of them! Lastly, Chris Sloan gave a wonderful presentation regarding his trip to the Galapagos Islands this past November. Chris explained the topography of the islands as well as the implications of Darwin's research there, especially of the Darwin's finches. His presentation ended with a most impressive slide showing of his personal photographs of the functional differences in the all of the Darwin's finches' beaks. We certainly appreciate all the time and effort of our presenters in organizing and producing these presentations.

During the January NTOS meeting, I had the privilege of recognizing a thoroughly energetic and knowledgeable young lady who has joined us, along with her family, on many field trips and Radnor walks. On her 12th birthday, we honored Ms. Chloe Walker as the 2012 recipient of the Conrad Jamison, Jr., Award which is given to a young birder who exemplifies a youthful exuberance and enthusiasm for both nature in general and birding in particular. We are proud to have Chloe as one of our new members and hope to see many more young birders on the trail in the near future.

I want to thank all those throughout the state who helped so much with the Sandhill Crane Festival at Hiwassee refuge. I know of 30 or more people from NTOS who either helped to contribute, volunteer, or simply came to enjoy the festivities. I'm sure more details are forthcoming, but by all accounts, it was a resounding success.

We're looking forward to seeing everyone at the spring meeting in Johnson City!

Steve Routledge

OPERATION MIGRATION 2011-2012

The 1285 mile migration south to Florida for Operation Migration's (OM) 10 Whooping Crane chicks started in Wisconsin on 10-08-11. It ended at mile 702 in north Alabama on 02-04-12. This early ending was not expected. For the first time in eleven years of successfully leading the crane chicks to locations in Florida, OM's plans were foiled by weather. This winter is on record as being the fourth warmest in history. It produced days on end of strong wind and rain causing the migration to be grounded. Momentum could not be generated.

After being grounded for days on end, the cranes, refused to fly any farther south even in good flying weather. Those in the know about these issues met and decided to box the chicks, transport them less than 50 miles by road to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in north Alabama on the Tennessee River. There they were released. After being penned for a few days, having health checks and radio transmitters fitted, the 9 chicks were released to the wild. Happily, all is well with their introduction to the real world. With their release there are 107 Whooping Cranes in the Eastern Migratory population (EMP).

Brooke Pennypacker, current crane chick chaperone and also one of OM's ultra-light pilots, reports that he sees "indifference" in the group to mingling with masses of Sandhill Cranes and several Whooping Cranes. Sandhills and Whoopers have already headed north from Wheeler. So far the chicks are staying put.

On 12-21-11 wind and rain was forecast for the future days. The OM Crew was sent home for the holidays. A skeleton crew remained in camp to look after the 9 chicks. This was on migration day 75, down day 10 in Franklin County, Alabama.

On 1-04-12 the Federal Aeronautical Administration (FAA) grounded all ultra-light pilots. On 1-10-12, FAA allowed OM's ultra-light pilots to continue flying, while they studied their laws. On 1-12-12 the southward migration continued, except bad weather kept them grounded. In late January a rodeo flight pushed the migration nine miles further south to Winston County, AL. The migration was halted after day 95 of the migration, down day 9, in Winston County, AL.

The Mile Maker Campaign continues as a means of financially supporting OM's efforts. As of 2-28-12, 1167 miles out of 1285 miles have been sponsored. The 109 miles in TN. have been all covered. The birding community in TN responded well this year. NTOS and KTOS each sponsored 2 miles while CTOS had 1 mile. Individuals and Wild Bird Unlimited sponsored 3.5 miles. OM would like to have all 1285 miles sponsored before too long.

Interestingly, Whooping Cranes in the Eastern and Western populations failed to migrate south as usual this year. For example, in the Eastern population in 2012, 40 cranes remained in IN when only 8 were counted in 2010. In FL, in 2012, only 11 cranes were counted, compared to 50 in 2010. In the Western population the National Wildlife Service expected about 300 Whooping Cranes to be counted in Texas this year. Instead only 193 were counted in Texas with the rest lingering farther north. These findings pose a question: will the cranes return to "normal" breeding grounds in spring or fly farther north?

Finally, chick #2 -11, which went missing during the migration in WI on 10-11-11, was reported in Central Florida in October. What a story that would make if you could retrace its route!

Next time there will be reports about nesting successes. Stay tuned!

Tony King KTOS Certified Craniac
865-988-6172

An American Bird Conservancy Opinion editorial:

Birds and Humans: When Worlds Collide

The other day a member of the public called ABC's offices in Washington, DC, to follow up on a story we had reported. More than 500 birds had been killed at a West Virginia wind power facility, just one of many similar events occurring across the country throughout the year, every year. The caller asked several questions specific to this incident, and then asked another, more general question: why can't the birds simply learn to avoid the wind turbines? We explained that the first encounter most birds have with a turbine – or for that matter, a tall tower, glass building, or any other structure responsible for more than a billion collisions each year – is usually fatal, and so there is little opportunity for them to learn from the experience.

The caller's seemingly innocent question is not uncommon, but behind it lies evidence of a troubling philosophy: that it is up to wildlife to adapt to each new human change on the landscape. If species can't keep up, it's their fault.

There are two problems with this notion. The first is that changes in nature take time, whereas human impacts are nearly instantaneous. It took the Golden Eagle millennia to evolve its highly effective hunting strategy of soaring above the ground, scouring the landscape below for prey. It has never had reason to look up to see what lies in its flight path because there has never before been anything else there to collide with. But suddenly the eagle's airspace is peppered with turbine blades spinning at 100-plus miles-per-hour. How can it suddenly change to cope with this new paradigm?

The second problem is that each human-created threat does not occur in isolation. Collision with man-made structures is only one of many new and growing hazards that birds now face; hazards that run the gamut from environmental contaminants such as pesticides and lead, to overfishing, invasive species, and introduced disease, to the ubiquitous specter of habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation. Asking animals to adapt to all of these threats at once is asking the impossible.

Nature is totally unaware that it is engaged in a deadly game of chicken with the human race. The juggernaut of human progress is careening down the road towards it at break-neck speed, giving species no time to get out of the way. Our impacts on the environment are outstripping the pace at which populations can naturally adapt; we cannot expect birds to simply evolve their way out of the onslaught.

But extinction is a perfectly natural phenomenon, so why should it matter if bird species disappear for good? Behind this second question lies another dangerous assumption: that the loss of birds and other wildlife has no impact on us; that we are somehow immune to the impoverishment of our environment. It is certainly hard to convey, other than perhaps in emotional terms, how the loss of a single bird species – for example the Po'ouil, a small Hawaiian songbird that went extinct in 2004 – affects humans, particularly when most of us would never have seen it anyway. But cumulatively species loss amounts to death by a thousand cuts. Each tiny incision produces a barely noticeable drop of blood, but together they contribute to the slow, inevitable exsanguination of the planet we inhabit.

Birds pollinate our crops, control our pests, disperse our seeds, and fertilize our earth; they alert us to environmental contamination; they bring joy to millions and income to millions more in the form of the birdwatching and bird feeding industries. Instead of asking why birds don't adapt to the changes we cause, we should be asking how we can adapt our behavior and technology to protect birds, their habitats, and our shared planet. Their conservation should be a significant long-term priority for our society—a promise to keep for the generations that will follow us

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